

Statewide Planning Program
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Work on the Statewide Planning Program's website this quarter included:

- posting of Transportation Improvement Plan amendments.
- posting of the Rivers Policy and Classification Plan
- posting of local Affordable Housing Plans for review.
- posting of local Comprehensive Plan 5-year updates for review
- posting of State Planning Council, Technical Committee, Rivers Council, and Transportation Advisory Committee's Calendar and Agendas.
- posting of monthly newsletter.
- posting of quarterly report.
- Initiation of electronic filing regarding meeting notices and minutes with the Secretary of State's office to comply with the Open Meetings Law.
- posting of Technical Paper 154: RI Population Projections: State County and Municipal 2000-2030
- posting of the State Land Use Policies and Plan (Draft)

- Posting of Technical Paper 156: EDA Public Works in RI 1996-20000

For information on the Statewide Planning Program's website contact Kim A. Gelfuso at (401) 222-5764, kimgo@lori.state.ri.us

STAFF NEWS

Statewide Planning would like to welcome **Paul Gonsalves**, Senior Planner in the Comprehensive Planning Section and also **Ben Bergantino**, Senior Planner in the Land Use Section.
Welcome to Statewide

James Andrade celebrated 38 years in state government on October 17, 2004, all of which have been with Statewide.

Vinny Flood celebrated 5 years with Statewide Planning on October 10, 2004. Congratulations

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program

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Quarterly Progress Report

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLANS SUBMITTED FOR STATE APPROVAL

In an effort to increase the production of affordable housing for low and moderate income households, in 1991? the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act. This Act provided the means for an expedited local review of applications by non-profit organizations for housing developments which incorporated publicly-subsidized units as well as an expedited appeal of local permit denials to a special appeals body (the State Housing Appeals Board). This "comprehensive permit process" could be accessed in all those communities whose housing stock did not include at least 10% publicly-subsidized units.

In response to the dissatisfaction with what affordable housing advocates saw as the lack of progress under the Act, it was broadened in 2002 by the General Assembly to include units produced by "for-profit" private developers. This led to a deluge of "comprehensive permit applications" which quickly became a serious political issue as local government officials decried their lack of control over the development of their towns.

Under legislation passed by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 2004, a moratorium was placed on the applications of "for-profit" developers until July 1, 2005 and the 29 affected communities had to develop local affordable housing plans, adopt them as a component of the Housing Element of their local comprehensive plan, and submit them to the Statewide Planning Program for State review no later than December 31, 2004. All 29 did!

As summarized in Handbook #16: Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan, the fundamental requirements for an affordable housing plan are:

"...[The plan] must identify specific steps that the municipality will take to increase the supply of affordable housing and identify resources to be used in this regard. Specifically the affordable housing plan should be a clear statement and guide to the housing development

community that allows them to identify the types and number of affordable housing units in specific locations as desired by the community to address their affordable housing needs."

Under the new Act there are several benefits to communities whose local comprehensive plan includes a State-approved affordable housing plan:

*Municipalities may utilize the plan to indicate the production needs and suitable areas for low and moderate income housing, and to establish their plans for compliance with the requirements of the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (RIGL 45-53).

Communities with state approved affordable housing plans are to receive priority for housing and community development programs and funds administered by State agencies.

*Provided they are meeting housing needs by adopting an implementation program and not unreasonably denying applications, they may limit the total number of units applied for annually under the provisions of the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act (RIGL 45-53) to 1% of their year-round housing stock.

Thus far, the Towns of Burrillville and Cumberland have had their Affordable Housing Plans approved by the State. All communities will receive the initial set of State comments on their plans by early February. Meetings are being scheduled between the local and State officials to discuss the State's findings.

The glut of these affordable housing plans submitted for State review places a large burden on the reviewing State agencies - particularly the Statewide Planning Program and Rhode Island Housing - if all 29 communities are to have State-approved affordable housing plans in place before the application moratorium expires on June 30th.

RI Census

Representatives of State Data Center Lead Agencies attended the Regional Census Bureau Meeting in Boston. Discussions centered on the accuracy and reliability of annual estimates produced from data collected through the American Community Survey, and on planning activities being prepared for the 2010 decennial census.

U.S. Census Regional staff presentation illustrated the Master Address File/Tiger Enhancement Program (MTEP) and how it will directly benefit data users by spatially correcting the line segments in the TIGER line file to an accuracy of 7.6 meters or better. Once the TIGER file is enhanced, future partnering with local officials will make implementation of Census programs and projects more convenient and efficient.



Issues relating to the implementation of the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) project (scheduled to begin in 2008) were also discussed. This project will provide the opportunity for local governments to review and update the Census Bureau's address list.

KEYS AMENDMENT

Statewide Planning has received new standards and enforcement procedures governing non-institutional facilities and programs licensed by the Department of MHRH and the Department of Health. In accordance with federal requirements outlined in Section 1616(e) of the Social Security Act, Statewide Planning will advertise through a public notice that the new regulations are available for public review and comment. Written comments will be forwarded to the appropriate federal authorities as prescribed in the Keys procedures.

Economic Development

The Economic Development Section, acting as the state's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) staff, forwarded copies of the 2004 CEDS *Annual Report* to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for review and approval. The EDA approved the report at the close of the quarter, praising the effort by the staff to establish quantifiable goals and performance measures. The report included the 2004 Priority Project List approved by the CEDS Committee last June.

Section staff completed its work on the technical paper *EDA Public Works in Rhode Island, 1996-2000*, which provided an evaluation of nine projects funded by the EDA in that period. The evaluation included job generation, wages, multiplier effects (economic spinoffs), and consonance between the state's project selection process and the EDA's.

Several recommendations were made for getting more projects funded, improving estimates of economic impact, and stimulating more jobs at higher wages. The paper was presented to the Technical Committee and the State Planning Council and made available for distribution.

The CEDS Subcommittee met in late December to consider an amendment to the 2004 Priority Project List that would add a project co-sponsored by the Town of East Greenwich and the R.I. Economic Development Corporation. The project would extend a water line to a redevelopment area formerly occupied by the Rocky Hill Fairgrounds. The Subcommittee approved the proposal with conditions aimed at promoting public transportation to and from the site. The Technical Committee and State Planning Council will vote to approve or disallow the amendment in January 2005.

Comprehensive Plans

The most significant occurrence during the second quarter of the State's FY 2005 for the Comprehensive Plans Section was the receipt of all 29 required local affordable housing plans. Two affordable housing plans (Cumberland & Burrillville) have been approved, while the remaining 27 are currently under State review. Nine communities have already received State review comments.

The municipalities' diligence in submitting their affordable housing plans in a timely manner greatly enhances the likelihood that all 29 communities will have State-approved plans in place when the moratorium on affordable housing development proposals by for-profit developers expires on June 30, 2005.

With respect to the State reviews of initial comprehensive plans, the Town of West Warwick had their final revisions approved. Upon receipt of a copy of the West Warwick Comprehensive Plan as approved, the Department of Administration will prepare the appropriate Certificate of Approval for presentation to the Town. The Town of Richmond was provided with State review comments concerning proposed revisions to their Comprehensive Plan.

Progress during the past quarter on Five-Year Updates to local comprehensive plans reveals that State approval was granted for the City of East Providence; final revisions were approved for the City of Pawtucket and the Town of East Greenwich; letters of deficiency were sent to Foster and South Kingstown; and the Five-Year Update to the Town of Burrillville's Comprehensive Plan was received and accepted for State review.

In conjunction with GrowSmart Rhode Island, the Housing Network of RI, the RI Chapter of the American Planning Association, the RI Housing & Mortgage Finance Corporation, and the RI Housing Resources Commission, staff from the Statewide Planning Program both assisted in the development of and participated in a housing workshop for municipalities entitled "Zoning for Housing Affordability: Financial considerations and Zoning Strategies".

The five session training program on "Next Communities Initiative" concluded. The program was sponsored by The New England Environmental Finance Center, the University of Southern Maine, GrowSmart RI, and Leadership Blackstone Valley. In addition to attending this training program, staff of the Comprehensive Plans Section was designated as Rhode Island's "resource person" for the program.

Intergovernmental Review
37 new proposals
32 completed
5 pending

Review of EDC projects
5 proposals received this quarter
0 proposals pending
6 proposals completed

Committee Actions

STATE PLANNING COUNCIL ACTIONS

The Council met in December. They received an update on progress relating to the FY 2005 Work Program. The focus of that update included discussions on staff responses to the requirements for submission of local affordable housing plans, the update to the Land Use Policies and Plan, and the status of the effort to update the Transportation Improvement Program. The Council also approved a policy that provides for posting of notice of local comprehensive plan amendments on the agency's web site.

TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ACTIONS

The Committee met in October, November and December. Acting in the capacity of the Council's advisory committee on the update of the land use element, the Committee received briefings on the content of the draft plan. In addition, the Committee also began review of the update of the Forest Resources Management Plan; element 161 of the State Guide Plan. The Committee reviewed Technical Paper 156: EDA Public Works in Rhode Island 1996-2000, which provides a detailed assessment of the types of projects funded by the EDA and how well they relate to the CEDS scoring criteria. It was determined that there was a strong correlation between the projects and the criteria but there were also some areas where the criteria could be refined.

GROWTH PLANNING COUNCIL

The Governor's Growth Planning Council is charged with examining the impacts of the state's current development patterns, evaluating the effect of state programs on sustainable development, recommending means to encourage sustainable development and fostering partnerships to build local capacity to manage growth. Statewide Planning is providing staff support to the Council.

The Council did not meet during the quarter, however, staff did meet with the Co-chairs and their staff to refine the growth centers approach. An effort is underway to tie this concept with some economic development initiatives as a way of institutionalizing the program.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The committee met in October and November of 2004. The TAC celebrated ten years of service to the State of Rhode Island at its November meeting. TAC members were praised as the hardest working, most dedicated group as well as possessing much institutional knowledge and expertise. Mr. David Tremblay of the Governor's Office presented a gubernatorial proclamation to the TAC and extended the Governor's appreciation. There were certificates of appreciation prepared for nine TAC members for ten years of continuous service.

Transportation

FY 06-07 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

The public outreach effort for the FY 2006-2007 TIP is well underway. In October 2004, correspondence was sent to town officials and other interested parties notifying them of the project solicitation process. Statewide Planning and the RI Department of Transportation held four public workshops in Providence, Pawtucket, South Kingstown, and Newport to explain the process for submitting TIP project proposals as well as Enhancement project proposals. The workshops were well attended by local officials, consultants, and non-government groups. Workshops were held earlier than in past TIP

cycles to allow local officials more time to schedule local public hearings, which are an important component of the public participation process. The proposal evaluation criteria were revised by the State Planning Council to award more points to projects benefiting safety, security, and technology. All application materials were available on the website, including a new downloadable Excel spreadsheet with application forms. Regular updates and reminders are being issued through the monthly electronic newsletter.

Land Use

Land Use Plan –Land Capability Analysis

The major effort of this quarter has been a land capability analysis using the RIGIS system. The analysis focuses on the approximately 40% of the state which is neither developed nor permanently protected as open space. The aim is to determine the suitability for development considering the location and concentration of selected natural resources and areas of concern, as well as the location of public water, sewer and highway infrastructure.

Eight data layers identifying natural resource and policy areas of concerns were mapped as constraints to development. These were buffers to surface water areas, wetlands and streams, A & V flood hazard areas, soils with ISDS constraints, rare species, agricultural soils and active farmland, major forest areas, groundwater reservoirs, recharge and community wellhead protection areas, and drinking water surface supply watersheds.

The resource constraint/value data was integrated with water and sewer location to assign land with different constraints to five development or conservation intensity classes.

The purpose is to identify the areas best suited to development and also those natural areas from which development should be guided.

The next phase of the analysis will prioritize development and conservation scenarios, consider alternative scenarios, analyze transportation impacts of the scenarios and compare findings to the Composite Future Land Use Map compiled from the Community Comprehensive Plans.

Forest Management Plan

Staff has coordinated with the Department of Environmental Management, Division of Forest Environment and Office of Sustainable Watersheds to produce a new Forest Management Plan to replace the 1984 State Guide Plan. It is intended to advance local stewardship of the state's trees and forest resources toward the twin goals of a healthy, sustainable economy and environment in conjunction with another State Guide Plan, The Urban and Community Forest Plan of 1999.

The Forest Management Plan has been reviewed by the Technical Committee and forwarded to the State Planning Council.

Comprehensive Plan Review

Staff continued to assist in administering reviews of Comprehensive Plan Updates and Affordable Housing Plans